



News for Immediate Release

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DWR Announces Fourth Snow Survey Results

SACRAMENTO – The Department of Water Resources' (DWR) fourth snow survey of the winter season indicates snowpack water content is 81 percent of normal for the date, statewide.

“A below-average snowpack at this time of year, especially following two consecutive dry years is a cause for concern,” said DWR Director Lester Snow. “Our most critical storage reservoirs remain low, and we face severe water supply problems in many parts of our state. Californians must continue to save water at home and in their businesses.”

Manual survey results taken today at four locations near Lake Tahoe, combined with electronic readings indicate a statewide snowpack water content of 81 percent (87 percent in the Northern Sierra, 80 percent in the Central Sierra, and 77 percent in the Southern Sierra.) Last year at this time, snowpack was 95 percent of normal, reflecting a drop of over 20 percent from March 2008 caused by the driest spring on record. The snowpack continued to melt early in 2008, resulting in a second consecutive critically dry water year. Daily electronic readings may be accessed at http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/snowsurvey_sno/DLYSWEQ.

On February 27, 2009, Governor Schwarzenegger declared a [drought state of emergency](#), directing DWR and other state agencies to provide assistance to people and communities impacted by the drought. On March 30, 2009, DWR provided the Governor an update on drought conditions and recommended strategies. The report and transmittal letter are available for viewing at <http://www.water.ca.gov/news/>.

Local water agencies are updating Urban Water Management Plans and DWR is facilitating water transfers through its Drought Water Bank program. Many providers have already enacted mandatory or voluntary water rationing and it is likely more agencies will require some form of rationing if dry conditions persist.

Storage in California's major reservoirs is low. Lake Oroville, the principal storage reservoir for the State Water Project (SWP), is only at 56 percent of capacity.

Continuing dry conditions and regulatory agency restrictions on Delta water exports are limiting water deliveries to farms and urban areas. A forthcoming Biological Opinion from the National Marine Fisheries Service to protect salmon and steelhead may further reduce pumping capability. DWR expects it will only be able to deliver only 20 percent of requested State Water Project water this year to the Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, Central Coast and Southern California.

Governor Schwarzenegger has outlined steps to safeguard the state's water supply through a comprehensive plan that includes water conservation, more surface and groundwater storage, new investments in the state's aging water infrastructure, and improved water conveyance to protect the environment and provide a reliable water supply. Today's drought and regulatory restrictions underscore the need to take action to safeguard tomorrow's water supply.

Here are results from today's manual survey at Phillips Station and other sites near Lake Tahoe:

Location	Elevation	Snow Depth	Water Content	% of Long Term Average
Alpha	7,600 feet	62.7 inches	28.8 inches	86
Phillips Station	6,800 feet	48.7 inches	22.6 inches	80
Lyons Creek	6,700 feet	80.3 inches	33.9 inches	109
Tamarack Flat	6,500 feet	57.7 inches	24.3 inches	90

Importance of Snow Surveying

Snow water content is important in determining the coming year's water supply. The measurements help hydrologists prepare water supply forecasts as well as provide others, such as hydroelectric power companies and the recreation industry, with needed data.

Monitoring is coordinated by DWR as part of the multi-agency California Cooperative Snow Surveys Program. Surveyors from more than 50 agencies and utilities visit hundreds of snow measurement courses in California's mountains to gauge the amount of water in the snowpack. The following Web sites offer an overview of important snow survey information:

Snowpack Site

http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/snowsurvey_sno/DLYSWEQ

Reservoir Storage Site

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/reservoirs/RES>

Snow Survey Illustrated

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/snow/hwy50/>

Updated Drought Site

<http://www.water.ca.gov/drought/>

(The updated Drought Web site provides information on reservoir storage (current, percent of average, one year ago; snowpack information, and Northern and Southern Sierra precipitation currently, for the month, the season,

and one year ago)

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.